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Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for March 3rd, 2017

To see what we've added to the Electric Scotland site view our What's New page at:
<http://www.electricscotland.com/whatsnew.htm>

To see what we've added to the Electric Canadian site view our What's New page at:
<http://www.electriccanadian.com/whatsnew.htm>

For the latest news from Scotland see our ScotNews feed at:
<http://www.electricscotland.com/>

Electric Scotland News

Got an amusing wee story in by email and here it is...

Two girls caught fighting in the school corridor. Separated and taken aside, each was asked to explain her behaviour.

'Oh, Miss, she called me a really terrible word', said one.

'What was the word?'

'I can't say it'.

'Well, if you can't say it, spell it out'.

'Miss, she called me a fucking C-O-W'.

Spent a fair bit of time on Forfar and Angus this week so a number of books on the area for you to enjoy.

Nicola Sturgeon's Right: Scotland's Great Deal

[This piece originally appeared in the Daily Record on 26/01/2017] and this article came from the Chokka Blog.

On Monday, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon used her column in this paper to talk up the benefits of living and working in Scotland. After listing many of our country's wonderful attributes, she concluded by saying: "To put it simply, if you are a taxpayer in Scotland you get more for your money, a much better deal, than anywhere else in the UK."

I couldn't agree with her more. It's refreshing to hear the SNP leader recognising that Scotland gets a great deal out of our membership of the UK. It is, after all, only because of ongoing UK-wide pooling & sharing of resources that, despite the collapse in North Sea oil revenues, we're able to maintain Scotland's higher levels of public spending.

In fact we can see how much of a "better deal" we get by simply looking at the Scottish Government's own Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland (GERS) report for 2015-16 and comparing Scotland's figures with those for the rest of the UK.

Using round numbers, in Scotland we raise £400/person less in taxes but we receive £1,300/person more in public spending. This means we receive an effective fiscal transfer from the rest of the UK of £1,700/person - that translates into £9bn a year.

Despite what you might read among the murkier backwaters of social media, these GERS figures are robust¹. It's worth noting also that per person spending differences have nothing to do with allocated Defence, Debt Interest or International Affairs costs, because those are apportioned on a population basis.

So where does the extra spending go? Well let's look at some examples where that money allows different choices to be made in Scotland;

We get £151/person more spent on Health, which helps fund free prescriptions and personal care for the elderly

We get £216/person more spent on Education and Training, which helps fund tuition-free higher education

We get £185/person more spent on Transport, which supports greater road and rail infrastructure investment (and helps keep bridges toll-free)

We get £122/person more spent on Enterprise and Economic development, which allows our First Minister to boast of a £500m Scottish Growth scheme for businesses

The list goes on: Scotland spends more per person than the rest of the UK in pretty much every area.

Those who argue that Scotland's GERS deficit is somehow a poor advert for how Scotland is served by being in the UK miss this basic point: the UK allows us to spend more on public services than we could otherwise sustain - that's the main reason we have a higher deficit, why the £9bn deficit gap (the famous "black-hole") exists.

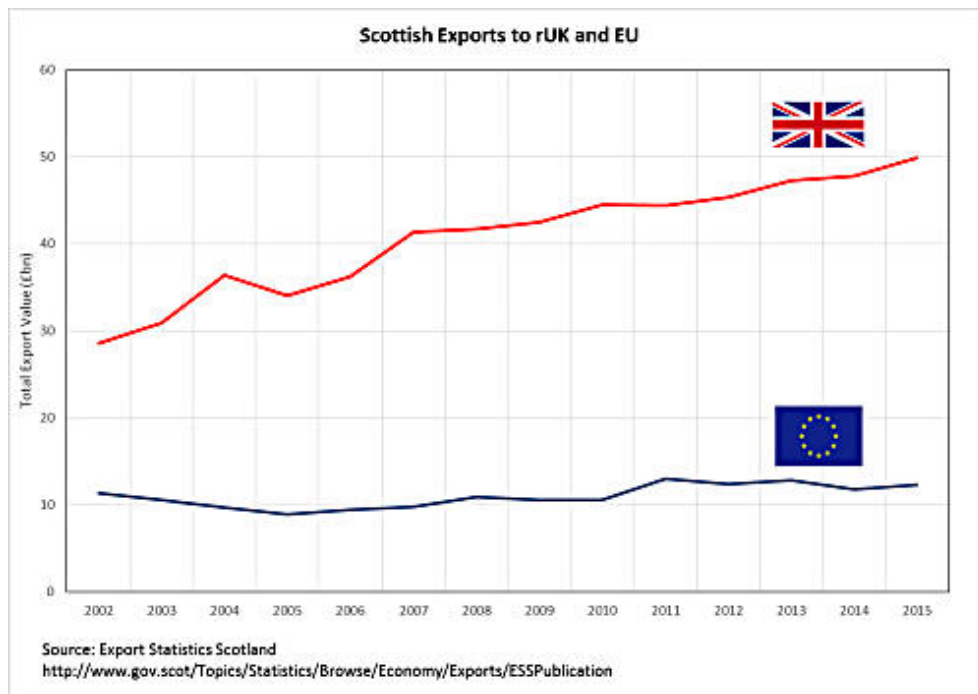
This isn't about being "subsidy junkies" either. A core principle of our economic union is that public service levels should be similar wherever you live in the UK. Scotland's geographically dispersed population, remote island communities and particular demographic challenges means it simply costs more to deliver the same levels of public services in Scotland. This argument is of course somewhat undermined when we have a Scottish Government that diverts money away from helping the most needy and uses it instead to fund vote-winning freebies that well-off Scots (but not our English neighbours) get to enjoy. But that's a debate for another day.

If you'd rather take a more transactional view of the union, it can reasonably be argued that higher public spending in Scotland now is simply payback for sharing "our oil" during the boom times. Indeed it can be shown that, despite our ongoing higher spending levels, Scotland is still a net positive contributor to the UK economy since the oil boom began in 1980. We have no need to feel embarrassed about getting our reward for that today.

So I can agree with our First Minister that Scots taxpayers currently get a great deal out of being in the UK. So what is it about Brexit that makes the SNP insist it's worth reconsidering independence and guaranteeing we'd lose that £9bn fiscal transfer?

As a Remain voter I get the emotional arguments, but as a businessman I also appreciate the hard economic realities. Scotland currently enjoys free access to two single markets: the UK and the EU. In the context of a hard Brexit, it's increasingly clear that a second independence referendum would require Scots to decide between free access to one or the other.

The graph below shows that Scotland exports over four times as much to the rest of the UK than to the EU and that – over a period when we have enjoyed free access to both markets - exports to the rest of the UK have grown much faster than those to the EU.



Combine this with the £9bn fiscal transfer and it's clear: the economic arguments for Scotland remaining in the UK are stronger now than they've ever been.

FACT CHECK

Interviewed on the BBC's Daily Politics show, SNP MP Joanna Cherry tried to play up the importance of the EU market vs the rest of the UK by saying "for us, at the moment, the growth market is the EU". The graph above shows the latest statistics released yesterday: she's simply wrong. She also asserted that it was a "little known fact" that "Scotland is actually England's largest export destination"; this too is demonstrably false, as demonstrated by the table below

	Scotland	UK	EU	USA	RoW	Total
UK Exports to ...			44%	20%	37%	100%
Scotland Exports to ...		63%	16%	6%	15%	100%
rUK Exports to ...	10%		39%	18%	33%	100%

Sources
Chokkablog/@kevverage analysis of HMRC Pink Book, ESS, QNAS
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/nationalaccounts/balanceofpayments/datasets/>
<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Economy/Exports/ESSPublication/ESSExcel>
<http://www.gov.scot/topics/statistics/browse/economy/QNA2016Q2>

Note: I was quite amazed at how little we export to the USA.

Scottish News from this weeks newspapers

Note that this is a selection and more can be read in our ScotNews feed on our index page where we list news from the past 1-2 weeks. I am partly doing this to build an archive of modern news from and about Scotland as all the newsletters are archived and also indexed on Google and other search engines. I might also add that in newspapers such as the Guardian, Scotsman, Courier, etc. you will find many comments which can be just as interesting as the news story itself and of course you can also add your own comments if you wish.

BBC bosses announce two new radio stations for Scotland

BBC chiefs have confirmed they are looking to push ahead with the creation of two national radio stations in Scotland split between music and speech.

Read more at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/bbc-bosses-announce-two-new-radio-stations-for-scotland-1-4375338>

Scots legal system is centuries out of date, its highest judge complains

Scotland's most senior judge has claimed that the Scots legal system is stuck in the 19th century and needs to be modernised to provide better justice.

Read more at:

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/scotland/scots-legal-system-is-centuries-out-of-date-its-highest-judge-complains-755w8n8xd>

Canada must embrace its closest allies and launch trade talks with the UK

The restoration of Canada's reputation abroad was one of the great achievements of Stephen Harper's Conservative government.

Read more at:

<http://brexitcentral.com/canada-must-embrace-closest-allies-launch-trade-talks-uk-soon-possible/>

United States could become an associate member of the Commonwealth

The project, which is said to be backed by the Queen, has come about in part as a result of Donald Trump's fondness for Britain and the Royal Family.

Read more at:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/02/23/donald-trumps-love-royal-family-may-see-united-states-join-commonwealth/>

Roslin 1303: Scotland's forgotten battle

It ended as the bloodiest battle ever fought on British soil, but remains largely forgotten.

Read more at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/news/roslin-1303-scotland-s-forgotten-battle-1-4375767>

Italy - splitting into oblivion

Hence the split in the center-left Democratic Party of Italy last weekend might have passed with little interest. But that would be wrong

Read more at:

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/us-italy-eu-commentary-idUKKBN1631QK>

Named person consultation criticised

Freedom of information requests by the group for details of the consultation discussions were rejected.

Read more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-39091688>

Nicola Sturgeon's Right: Scotland's Great Deal

On Monday, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon used her column in this paper to talk up the benefits of living and working in Scotland.

Read more at:

<http://chokkablog.blogspot.ca/2017/02/nicola-sturgeons-right-scotlands-great.html>

Two Wrongs Don't Make a Right

Like a Hollywood producer who can't find any original ideas, it seems First Minister Nicola Sturgeon is determined to make Indyref2: The Sequel.

Read more at:

<http://chokkablog.blogspot.ca/2017/02/two-wrongs-dont-make-right.html>

Ambitious bid to build model railway in Scottish glen

Model railway enthusiasts and volunteers are being sought for an ambitious plan to lay a model railway track along Scotland's Great Glen.

Read more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-39114195>

Missed NHS waiting times

NHS Scotland figures show a number of key targets are being missed and the gap is widening.

Read more at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/news/opposition-parties-on-attack-over-missed-nhs-waiting-times-1-4379347>

Advantages of trading under WTO rules

Britain's rights under the World Trade Organisation. Those rights are very extensive: much wider than many commentators wish to recognise.

Read more at:

<http://brexitcentral.com/government-business-prepare-advantages-trading-wto-rules/>

Italy now poses a bigger threat to the eurozone than Greece

Italy has barely grown since the euro was introduced in 1999

Read more at:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/eurozone-eu-europe-germany-sweden-spain-italy-failing-economy-biggest-threat-a7606256.html>

Donald Trump visit will shift to Scotland

President Donald Trump will reportedly visit Scotland in October.

Read more at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/news/world/donald-trump-visit-will-shift-to-scotland-to-deter-protests-1-4380716>

Kevin McKenna, "The Scottish pioneer whose plan for a basic income could transform Britain" Kerr charges that the UK's social benefit system is no longer adequate, and believes that it is important to consider radical change as a way to give people hope.

Read more at:

<http://basicincome.org/news/2017/02/kevin-mckenna-scottish-pioneer-whose-plan-basic-income-transform-britain/>

Electric Canadian

Chronicles of Canada

Added Volume 20: A Chronicle of the Arctic Seas.

I might add that I've found text copies of these volumes so have added a link to them on the page. I also found a page where you can get audio copies so have placed a link to these as well.

You can read this at: <http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/chronicles/index.htm>

D. C. Beard

Author of many books on bush craft for the Boy Scouts of America. I thought I'd bring you a few of them as having found them I enjoyed them and so hope you do as well.

Added another book, "The Jack of All Trades" in which you get shown how to build a tree house which you can read at: <http://www.electriccanadian.com/pioneering/beard/>

Electric Scotland

The Forfar Directory and Year Book

A most interesting publication with lots of wee stories and articles. I have now added the 1891 edition which you can read at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/forfar/direct/>

French Pictures

Drawn with Pen and Pencil by The Rev. Samuel G. Green, D.D.

As a number of Scottish Clans originated in France this should be of interest to many.

You can view this at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/france/frenchpictures.pdf>

Reminiscences of the life and labours of Dugald Buchanan

Added this book and also a book of his Gaelic poems.

The Author of the following Pieces (Dughall Bochannan) was a native of Sutherland-shire, and resided from his youth in the heights of the Parish of Kildonan. He was born in 1719, and died January, 1782. Though destitute of the advantages of education, he was one of the most celebrated Christians in that, or perhaps any other country. He possessed a clear and comprehensive view of Divine truths; and discovered (what, alas! is more rarely to be met with) a deep and practical experience of its power on the heart and life. His memory to this day in that country is much and justly revered, and will be long embalmed in the hearts of many who knew and could appreciate his worth. It will be seen from the following Pieces, that he was also a Christian Poet, and that in no ordinary degree. They were composed on different occasions; and most of them relate to occurrences in the ways of Providence respecting himself, of which he was not an inattentive observer. They, may; nevertheless be useful to others, and especially to serious and exercised Christians. It is with this intention, and at the importunity of friends who reckoned them worthy of being preserved, and more generally spread, that they are now published. The work necessarily labours under the disadvantages of a posthumous one; and the dialect in which it is written, but which it was not thought proper to alter, may not be quite intelligible to those in the more Southern Districts of the Highlands. It is hoped, nevertheless, that its circulation may be attended with no small degree of usefulness; and, under this impression, we most cordially give the Publication our humble sanction.

You can read these at: <http://www.electricscotland.com/gaelic/Laoidhean.htm>

The Baronage of Angus and Mearns

Comprising the Genealogy of three hundred and sixty families by David MacGregor Peter (pdf). Added a link to this book at the foot of our Forfar page.

Annals of an Angus Parish (Auchterhouse)
By Rev. W. Mason Inglis, M.A., FSA Scot (1888)

Flora of Forfarshire
By William Gardiner (1848)

You can read the above three books on our Forfar page at:
<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/forfar/>

Beth's Newfangled Family Tree
Got in section 1 of the march 2017 issue. You can read this at:
<http://www.electricscotland.com/bnft/index.htm>

The Story

I found this story in a book called "Scottish Stories from the Family Treasure".

A Mother's Love

In the Highlands of Scotland, lived a poor widow with her only child, an infant boy. Hard was her lot at this time—for her rent was overdue some weeks, and the agent threatened to dispossess her of her little farm, if it was not paid at once.

The little village where herself and ancestors had lived for more than three generations was about to be swept away, in order to enlarge a sheep farm. Indeed, along the margin of the great stream which watered the green valley, and along the shore of the lake, might even be traced the rains of many a hamlet where happy and contented people once lived, but where no sound is now heard, except the bleating of a solitary sheep, or the scream of the eagle as he wheels his flight among the dizzy precipices above. Earnestly did the widow desire to keep her little home; and to enable her to do so, she determined, after due consideration, to make known her trouble to a kinsman of her husband's, who, at the time of his death, promised, if she needed it, he would assist her to pay her rent. It was a lovely morning in May, when the widow left her home very early, that she might reach her kinsman's house before night, carrying her infant boy, who was not yet two years old, upon her back. The journey was a long one. The mountain track which she had to travel, after leaving the small village by the sea-shore, where the widow lived, passes through a green valley, wa-

tered by a peaceful stream which flows from the neighboring lake; it then winds along the margin of the solitary lake, until near its farther end it suddenly turns into an extensive copsewood of oak and birch. From this it emerges half-way up a rugged mountain side, and, entering a dark glen, through which a torrent gushes amidst great masses of granite, it at last conducts the traveler by a zigzag ascent to a narrow gorge, which is hemmed in upon every side by grand precipices. Overhead is a strip of blue sky, while all below is dark and gloomy. It was, indeed, a wild and lovely path, that requires the eye to behold to realize the journey and situation of this poor widow with her fatherless babe.

From the mountain pass her home was ten miles off, and no human habitation was nearer than her own. She had undertaken a long journey indeed. The morning when the widow left her home gave promise of a lovely day, but before noon a sudden change took place in the weather. Northward the sky became black, and lowering masses of clouds rested upon the hills, and sudden gusts of wind began to whistle among the rocks, and to ruffle with black squalls the surface of the loch. The wind was succeeded by rain, and the rain by sleet, and the sleet by a heavy fall of snow. The wildest day of winter never beheld flakes of snow falling heavier or faster, or whirling with more fury along this the mountain pass, filling every hollow, and whitening every rock. It is yet remembered in Scotland as the great May storm. Weary and wet, foot-sore and cold, the widow reached this mountain pass with her child. She knew that a mile beyond was a shieling which would afford her shelter from the blast; but the moment she attempted to face the storm of snow which was rushing through the narrow gorge, all hope failed of proceeding in that direction. To return home was equally impossible. She must find shelter. The wild cats' or foxes' den would be welcome. After wandering about for some time among the huge fragments of granite which skirted the base of the overhanging precipices, she at last found a more sheltered rock. She crouched beneath a projecting rock, and pressed her child to her trembling bosom. The storm continued to rage; the snow was accumulating overhead. Hour after hour passed, and it became bitterly cold.

The evening approached, and the widow's heart became sick with fear and anxiety. Her child—her only child—was all she thought of. She wrapped him in her shawl, but the poor thing had been scantily clad, and the shawl was thin and worn. Her own clothing was not sufficient to defend herself from such a night as this, more piercing in its cold than had been felt all winter. But whatever was to become of herself, her child must be preserved. The snow, in whirling eddies, entered the recess, which at best afforded them but a miserable shelter. The night came on. The wretched mother stripped off almost all her own clothing, and wrapped it around her child, whom, at last, in despair, she pat into a deep crevice of the rock among some dried heather and fern. And now she resolved, at all hazards, to brave the storm, and return home, in order to get assistance for her babe, or perish in the attempt. Claspings her infant to her heart, and covering his face with tears and kisses, she laid him softly down in sleep, and rushed into the snowy drift.

That night of storm was succeeded by a peaceful morning. The sun shone from a clear blue sky,* and wreaths of mist hung along the mountain tops, while a thousand water-falls poured down their sides. Dark figures, made visible at a distance on the white ground, might be seen with long poles examining every hollow near the mountain path. They are people from the village, seeking for the widow and her son. They have reached the pass. A cry is made by one of the shepherds as he sees a bit of tartan cloak among the snow. They have found the widow— dead, with her arms stretched forth as if imploring assistance. Before noon they discovered her child by its cries. He was safe in the crevice of the rock.

The story of that woman's affection for her child was soon read in language which all understood. Her almost naked body revealed her love. Many a tear was shed, many an exclamation, expressive of admiration and affection, was uttered from enthusiastic, sorrowing Highland hearts, when on that evening the aged pastor gathered the villagers in the deserted house of mourning, and by prayer and fatherly exhortation, sought to improve, for their soul's good, an event so sorrowful.

More than half a century passed away! That aged pastor was long dead, though his memory still lingers in many a retired glen among the children's children of parents whom he had baptized.

This son, whose locks are white with age, was preaching to a congregation of Highlanders in one of our great cities. It was on a communion Sabbath. The subject of his discourse was the love of Christ. In illustrating the self-sacrificing nature of that love, "which seeketh not her own," he narrated the story of the Highland widow, whom he had himself known in his boyhood. And he asked, " If that child were still living, what would you think of his heart if he did not cherish the greatest affection for his mother's memory; and if the sight of the poor tattered cloak, which she had wrapped around him, in order to save his life at the cost of her own, did not fill him with gratitude and love too deep for words? Yet what hearts have you, my hearers, if over these memorials of your Savior's love, in the sacrifice of himself, you do not feel them glow with deeper love and with adoring gratitude ?"

A few days after this, a message was sent by a dying man with a request to see this clergyman. The request was speedily complied with.

The sick man seized the minister by the hand, and gazing intently on his face, said: "You do not, you can not recognize me. But I know you, and I knew your father before you. I have been a wanderer in many lands. I have visited every quarter of the globe, and fought and bled for my king and country. I came to the city a few weeks since in bad health. Last Sabbath day, I entered your church—the church of my countrymen—where I would once more hear, in the language of my youth and of my heart, the blessed Gospel of the grace of God to poor, perishing, dying men. I heard you tell the story of the widow and her son"—here the voice of the old soldier faltered, his emotion choked his utterance, but, recovering himself for a moment, he cried: "I am that son!" and burst into a flood of tears. "Yes," he continued; "I am that son! Never, never did I forget my mother's love. Well might you ask, what a heart should mine have been if she had been forgotten by me ? Though I never saw her, dear to me is her memory; and my only desire now is, to lay my bones beside hers in the old church-yard among the hills. But, sir, what breaks my heart and covers me with shame is this: until now I never saw, with the eyes of the soul, the love of the Savior in giving himself for me—a poor, lost, hell-deserving sinner. I confess it, I confess it! " he cried, looking up to heaven, his eyes streaming with tears; and, pressing the minister's hand close to his breast, he added:

"It was God that made you tell that story. Praise be to his holy name that my dear mother did not die in vain, and that the prayers which I am told she used to offer up for me have been at last answered; for the love of my mother has been blessed by the Holy Spirit, for making me see, as I never saw before, the love of the Savior. I see it, I believe it. I have found safety and deliverance in my old age, where I found it in my infancy—4 In the cleft of the rock—but now it is the Rock of Ages.' " And, clasping his hand, he repeated with great earnestness my text, altering the one word woman, to mother—" Can a mother forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? They may forget, yet will I not forget thee."

And that's it for this week and I hope you all have a good weekend.

Alastair